

**20** Idaho's Family History: Historic Records at Risk **01**  
Planning for Progress : A Summary Report

## What You Can Do

All of the projects described in this document depend on the involvement of a diverse group of individuals. Your participation in the projects is supported, welcomed, and encouraged.

Let local and state government, community and business leaders know that you support funding and efforts to preserve Idaho's records—our state's Family History.

For more information visit the SHRAB website at <http://www2.state.id.us/ishs/shrab.html> or contact the State Historical Records Coordinator at (208) 334-2620.

## Challenges for Idaho's Records

- A 1993 report showed Idaho was ranked 45th out of 50 in the percent of total state expenditures allocated to archives and records and 51st out of 51st (including territories) in the number of archives and records staff per 1000 state employees.
- Record storage in the Merle Wells Archives Building was finally completed in 1998, however plans are already underway for needed expansion of this space.
- Idaho continues to rank in the lowest 5% in spending for state archives.

This strategic plan will help support the Idaho Historical Society and other public historical repositories in the care and use of these records.

## Survey Results

Surveys conducted in 1999 of both public and private records repositories in Idaho demonstrated a dramatic need for improved storage facilities and access to trained staff in the care of our records. Without efforts to improve preservation of statewide historical records, Idaho will lose its recorded history.

Idaho Governmental Agencies:

	Yes				No			
	State	Cnty	Local	Schls	State	Cnty	Local	Schls
Official records stored in fire-resistant vault or safe?	9%	6%	22%	48%				
Take any special measures to ensure the preservation/ conservation of official permanent and historical records?					45%	53%	79%	83%
Trouble retrieving records?	36%	44%	62%	58%				

Idaho Historical Records Repositories:

*Annual Spending Budget for Historical Records –*

Spending Range	Total
\$1,000-\$10,000	18
\$10,000-\$50,000	9
\$50,000-\$100,000	1
Less than \$1,000	34
More than \$100,000	1
No Response	13

*Priorities for Improving the Management of Historical Records –*

1	Improve Preservation/Conservation
2	Improve Staff Training
3	Improve Finding Aids
4	Process Backlog
5	Encourage Use of Collections
6	Increase Storage Capacity
7	Increase Funding
8	Increase Visibility
9	Improve Storage Conditions
10	Develop Disaster Plan



Photo: Courtesy of The Idaho State Historical Society

The Idaho State Historical Records Advisory Board (SHRAB) works in affiliation with the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) for the purpose of preserving, publishing and promoting the use of documentary sources relating to the history of the United States. The Idaho SHRAB has fourteen members representing all of Idaho including archivists, librarians, historians, records managers, district court administrators and public or elected officials.

## Idaho's Family History - Historical Records

Consider the variety of documents that define a family . . . your great-grandparent's wedding certificate . . . a diary that your Mother kept when she was a young girl. Precious items that help tell the story of you and your family. These items remind us of the past and can help us understand the present and perhaps the future.

Each state has a family history as well, made up of the historical records that document the events, people and places of the state's family—it's citizens. Idaho's family history contains the letters, diaries, photographs, minutes, reports, petitions, maps, licenses, architectural plans, birth certificates, ledgers, business correspondence, and the many other records produced by Idaho's residents—past and present—that help us understand how our state has uniquely grown and developed.

These records not only tell the story of Idaho's past but they promote accountability of government, business, and other institutions. They can protect the individual rights of Idaho residents by such means as proving ownership of property or eligibility for various benefits. They support self-understanding when we uncover our family history. They link us directly with the people who came before us.



Photo: Courtesy of The Idaho State Historical Society

## The Urgent Need

Imagine now if you lost your past. You had no photographs to remind you of precious relatives, now gone. Imagine if you couldn't produce papers that proved ownership of your house or documented your children's birth. We protect ourselves from this by storing important papers in secure places such as safe deposit boxes. We strive to preserve those things that are important to us.

Just as we would be devastated at the loss of our treasured family documents and mementos, it is a tragedy when the state's documentary history is lost. Yet this is happening every day.

Historical records in your community and across the state are at risk. Your support is needed to improve the condition of Idaho historical records.

Historical records repositories in Idaho are under-staffed, under-funded, and overlooked. Most of these repositories have multiple roles, and care for records as only one of their missions. They rely on volunteers to ensure the preservation and accessibility of historical records. Many need more opportunity for collaboration, professional development, and funding.

In order to identify where the needs are greatest for the preservation and use of Idaho's records the State Historical Records Advisory Board (SHRAB) worked closely with Idaho communities and the public to articulate the need for statewide action to preserve and make accessible our historical records. This plan for the future is the result of that work and represents the collaboration and ideas of many of Idaho's family members.

This report was prepared with the support of the National Historical Publications and Records Commission under the auspices of the Idaho State Historical Advisory Board. A longer report is also available. This summary briefly describes the needs and presents the elements of the Strategic Plan. Copies may be obtained from the Board through the State Archives, Merle Wells Archives Building, 2205 East Old Penitentiary Road, Boise, ID 83712. Telephone: 208-334-2620. Web URL: <http://www2.state.id.us/ishs/shrab.html>

## PLANNING FOR PROGRESS

During 1999 and 2000 the Idaho State Historical Records Advisory Board (SHRAB) led a twenty two-month strategic planning effort to assess and improve the conditions of historical records in Idaho. Five priorities were identified:

1. Educate the public to value records and archives for self-understanding, government accountability, sound institutional management, and historical reflection.
2. Work collaboratively to promote common goals.
3. Obtain the resources necessary to achieve the objectives of the historical records community.
4. Plan for the adequate documentation of Idaho history.
5. Improve the accessibility and preservation of historical records.

Participants helped set goals and objectives for each priority area. Every Idaho resident can become an advocate for historical records and help achieve these objectives.

## PRIORITY ONE

**Educate the public to value records and archives for self-understanding, government accountability, sound institutional management, and historical reflection.**

### Goal

Increase public awareness of the value and use of historical records.

Objective 1: Design, execute and facilitate effective public outreach programs.

### Activities:

(2001): Implement Preservation Workshops for state-wide professional organizations.

Objective 2: Develop and promote a special "Archives Week," throughout Idaho schools and communities.

### Activities:

(2001): Establish Archives Week during the second week of October of every year.

(2002-2005): Continue to develop Archives Week exposure and activities.

Institute a program to encourage elected officials to visit archives and records repositories in their home districts. Use this event and visit as an opportunity for education.

Objective 3: Support the use of historical records in schools.

### Activities:

(2002-2005): Begin a "Corps of Rediscovery" program of Idaho history, helping students recognize authentic historical evidence from fiction.

Create a online exhibit using "Corps of Rediscovery" as its theme, to acquaint visitors to the importance of historical records to learning.

(2005-2011): Continue and expand historical records education programs established previously.

Objective 4: Identify and preserve documentation from Idaho's territorial period.

### Activities:

(2001): Introduce the Territorial Records Project, designed to identify, properly preserve, and make accessible all Idaho Territorial records.

(2002-2005): Complete Territorial Records Project.

## PRIORITY TWO

**Work collaboratively to promote common goals.**

### Goal

Foster cooperation, collaboration, and information sharing within the historical records community.

Objective 1: Promote collaboration among professionals and organizations across the historical records community.

### Activities:

(2001): Identify potential collaborative partners and develop a database of information on each.

Work with the Idaho State Historical Society's Outreach Division to develop further methods for disseminating the SHRAB's Strategic Plan throughout the state.

Use SHRAB Board to liaison with partner organizations.

(2002-2010): Continue to develop relationships with partner organizations and co-sponsor projects, policy formations, and procedural creation with other organizations.

## PRIORITY THREE

**Obtain the resources necessary to achieve the objectives of the historical records community.**

### Goal

Assist organizations to obtain resources to manage historical records.

Objective 1: Seek dedicated funding for the preservation and maintenance of records that have enduring value to the public.

### Activities:

(2001): Apply to the NHPRC and other funding agencies for funding strategic plan objectives.

Develop plan for establishing statewide dedicated funds for the preservation and maintenance of Idaho records of enduring value.

(2002-2010): Apply to NHPRC and other funding agencies for workshops and special projects (i.e., curriculum materials with historic records, in both paper and electronic formats.)

Establish a statewide dedicated fund for the preservation and maintenance of records of enduring value.

## PRIORITY FOUR

**Plan for the adequate documentation of Idaho history.**

### Goal

Improve documentation of Idaho History

Objective 1: Support the identification and collection of records that have enduring value.

### Activities:

(2001): Evaluate and establish criteria for the identification of historical records at the time of their creation including electronic records. Promulgate a uniform statewide retention schedule.

(2002-2005): Increase staff for historical preservation positions at the regional level.

(2005-2010): Identify gaps in the records collection and begin implementing a plan to fill. Begin planning for State provision of preservation microfilm services (with joint imaging capability) or plan for the subsidization of local entities that use this process currently.

## PRIORITY FIVE

**Improve the accessibility and preservation of historical records.**

### Goal

Improve the condition and accessibility of historical records in Idaho.

Objective 1: Recommend and support standards for preservation and access of records that have enduring value.

### Activities:

(2002-2005): Support a statewide program of preservation microfilming for long-term preservation of public records of enduring value combined with providing access electronically.

Recommend and work toward adoption and funding of statewide standards by executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government with legal consequences for noncompliance.

(2005-2011): Identify records of enduring value in need of conservation treatment statewide and seek funding to improve environmental and security conditions at public historical records storage facilities across Idaho.

Objective 2: Support continuing education and other activities that enable repositories to strengthen archival programs.

### Activities:

(2001): Develop means to increase the awareness of records creators, holders, and users of the problems associated with new technologies through presentations at scheduled meetings and through the media.

(2002-2005): Support the efforts of records holders to provide access to records in local repositories by urging a public/private partnership for funding.

(2005-2011): Facilitate cooperative solutions to the challenges of new technology by supporting the continuing education of records holders through annual workshops.



*Photo: Courtesy of The Idaho State Historical Society*

